**FAH 160: Museum History & Theory**

Andrew McClellan : Fall 2013  
Wednesday 6:30-9:00pm, Anderson 211 // office hours by appointment:  
andrew.mcclellan@tufts.edu (office located on second floor of Art History Dept., 11 Talbot Ave.)

**Learning Objectives:** This course will make you an analytic consumer of the most powerful and pervasive of art institutions: the art museum. Alternating sections on museum history, theory and contemporary practice provide a critical framework to understand how and why art museums have evolved and function today -- why they are so prominent the world over but also why they provoke controversy. Unlike a straightforward art history course, we will not study works of art but rather how art objects are displayed and interpreted within an institutional frame. This course contributes to our knowledge of art history by analyzing a crucial context in which we encounter works of art -- a context that shapes the reception and definition of art. My hope is that after taking this course no museum visit will ever be the same! Weekly class discussion and response pieces will sharpen critical thinking with respect to fundamental issues and current literature. Assignments include a comparative analysis of Boston area museums and a term paper on a relevant subject of your choice.

**Syllabus**

**Sept 4: Introduction: Open discussion of some recent issues**  
Museums and the Web.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_518882&feature=iv&src_vid=zuYzOn0U2PY&v=zw9NXY3xOOI

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-91GqSBnUUu

**Sept 11: Collecting and Curiosity**

Part 1: Collecting and Curiosity in Early Modern Europe  
Reading: Kenseth, Pomian, Kaufman, Schepelern; Fisher (on Purcell); Lepore

*Reading questions: what did people in early modern Europe collect, and why? Who collected?*

Part 2: Guest lecture by artist, collector and writer Rosamond Purcell

*Reading question: In what ways does Purcell’s work relate to earlier concepts of “curiosity”?*
**Sept 18: The Art Museum in Europe**

Part 1: History of European museums  
Reading: Duncan, 7-47

Part 2: Open discussion: What is the purpose of an art museum today?  
Reading: Hoving; Lee; Dobrzynski; Smith

*Write a paragraph in response to the articles by Hoving and Lee and Dobrzynski:  
“Do you find yourself agreeing more with Hoving or Lee? With Montebello or Krens? (Come to class prepared to discuss your response)*

**Sept 25: The Art Museum in the United States**

Reading: Duncan, 48-71

Part 2: Global Museum Ideals After 9/11  
Reading: McClellan, Art Museum Chap 1; McClellan, “Museum Expansion in the Twenty-First Century: Abu Dhabi”; Winegar, “Humanity Game.”  
Discuss Youtube video of Sheika al Mayessa, “Globalizing the local, localizing the global,” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nItwVO9stX8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nItwVO9stX8)

*Write a paragraph in response:  
“Can art museums bridge the gap between cultures? Can greater cultural understanding prevent another 9/11?”*

**Oct 2: Museum Architecture**

Part 1: A History of Museum Architecture  
Reading: McClellan, _Art Museum_ chap 2; Rybszynski, Forgey; Goldberger, Robinson,

Part 2: Discussion and film on Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao  
Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Bilbao Museum.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dm3M6rs6oI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dm3M6rs6oI)

*Write a paragraph:  
“Is dramatic architecture good or bad for museums?”*
Oct 9: Display Strategies
Reading: McClellan, Art Museum, Chap 3.

Part 1: Display Strategies Past and Present

Part 2: Organize your own gallery – a group exercise
Before you start, decide as a group what important principles need to be taken into consideration, such as:
What is your arrangement trying to achieve?
What relationship are you creating between objects on the wall and between object and visitor?
Are more objects always better than fewer, or can less be more? Quality vs. quantity?

Oct 16: NO CLASS: Museum Visit and Questionnaire
Reading: Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder”; Higonnet, “Museum Sight”

In lieu of class, visit the Museum of Fine Arts and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on your own time and complete the mid-term questionnaire (see below for details). You may find it helpful to visit the museums with someone from class, though your responses should be your own. You will need to read the Greenblatt article to answer one of the questions. The Higonnet reading will help you better appreciate the Gardner. Mid-terms to be submitted through Trunk before next class.

Oct 23: The Museum Public
Reading: McClellan, Art Museum, Chap 4; Zolberg, Cuno, Knight.

Part 1: A history of the art museum public and discussion of paragraph

Part 2: Discussion of Greenblatt’s concepts of ‘resonance’ and ‘wonder’ in connection with the MFA/Gardner

*Write a paragraph: Should or can art museums be for everyone?

Oct 30: Money: Funding & Commercialism
Reading: McClellan, Art Museum, Chap 5; Prior, de Montebello; McClellan,
“Public Museums, Private Power”; various articles (links below)

Part 1: A history of museum funding

Part 2: discussion of “Occupy Museums” and the crisis in Detroit

*Write a paragraph on EITHER (a) or (b):
(a) what do you make of the Occupy Museums movement?
(b) Should Detroit sell its art collections to help with bankruptcy?
(see web articles listed below and do your own web research)

Nov 6: Displaying the “Other”
Reading: Vogel, Karp, Clarke (a); Clarke (b)

Part 2: Guest lecture, Dr. Christa Clarke, Senior Curator of Arts of Global Africa, Newark Museum

*Reading questions: Should non-Western art be displayed like Western art or does it require more “context” (labels, atmospheric décor, audio-visual material, etc.)?

Nov 13: Restitution & Repatriation
Reading: McClellan, Art Museum, Chap 6 and Conclusion; newspaper articles (links below)

Part 1: Guest lecture: Sarah Kianovsky, Curator of Collections, Harvard Art Museums

Part 2: Historical Overview and Ethical Conundrums

*Write a paragraph in response: “Museums believe they have an ethical responsibility to collect antiquities and other cultural property; others think they have an ethical responsibility NOT to acquire such objects. What do you think?”

Nov 20: Artists in Museums
Reading: Corrin, O’Doherty, Judd, McShine, Asher, Dobrzynski

*Write a paragraph in response to Judith Dobrzynski’s article “High Culture Goes
Hands-On.

Nov 27: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

Dec 4: Brief presentations on final papers

*Final Papers due Friday, December 13 by 12pm. (Submit through Trunk)

Reading:

Required texts:

Other Readings - in order of use. Required readings are highlighted with an asterisk* and are available on Trunk unless a link in included below. Strongly recommended readings are also on Trunk, but these are not required.

Sept 11: Collecting & Curiosity – *REQUIRED*

*Jill Lepore, “Robert Ripley and his World,” *New Yorker* (June 3, 2013)

recommended (check out the images):
Snodin & Llewellyn, “Marvellous Materials,” *Baroque: Style in the Age of Magnificence*, 126-41

Sept 18: History of Museums in Europe – *REQUIRED*

*Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (1995), 1-47 (you may need to enhance the image to read clearly)
(March 1969), 2-6

Sept 25: The Art Museum in the United States – *REQUIRED*

* Carol Duncan, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums (1995), 48-71
* Jessica Winegar, “The Humanity Game: Art, Islam, and the War on Terror,” Anthropological Quarterly 81 (Summer 2008), 651-681

**Further reading on ideals and mission:**
Steven Moyano, “Quality vs. History: Schinkel’s Altes Museum and Prussian Arts Policy,” Art Bulletin (December 1990), 585-607
H. Barnett, “Pictures for the People,” Practicable Socialism (1894), 175-87
John Cotton Dana, The Gloom of the Museum (1917)

Oct 3: Museum Architecture – *REQUIRED*

*Paul Goldberger, “Art Houses,” The New Yorker (Nov 5, 2001)
Oct 9: Display Strategies

Further reading on classification and display:
Ivan Gaskell, “Sacred to Profane and Back Again,” in McClellan, Art and its Publics, 148-62
Jonathan Jones, “How’s it Hanging?” The Guardian (April 1, 2004), G2, 16-17
Hilton Kramer, “The museum as culture mall,” The New Criterion (June 2001), 4-8

Oct 16: Museum Visit & Questionnaire – *REQUIRED*

*Anne Higonnet, “Museum Sight,” in McClellan, Art and its Publics, 132-47

Oct 30: The Museum Public – *REQUIRED*

*Christopher Knight, “Elitist and Proud of It,” LA Times (Sept. 2, 2001)

Strongly recommended:

Further reading on the public:

Oct 30: Money: Funding & Commercialism –*REQUIRED*

*Nick Prior, “Having One’s Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era,” in McClellan Art and its Publics, 51-68
* “Public Museums, Private Power”
* Ads ask you “picture” Philadelphia as an art destination http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/21/business/media/ads-ask-you-to-picture-philadelphia-as-an-art-destination-campaign-spotlight.html?emc=eta1
* Detroit’s Creditors Eye its Art Collections.  
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/20/arts/design/detroits-creditors-eye-its-art-collection.html?ref=design  
* "Detroit Bankruptcy = sale of art?"  
* Detroit on the Colbert Report.  
* Opinions on whether Detroit should sell its art  
* Should Detroit Bail Out by Selling Van Gogh?  

**Strongly recommended:**  
H. Haacke, “In the Vice,” *Art Journal* (Fall, 1991), 51-5

**Further reading on commercialism:**  
H. Schiller, “Corporate Sponsorship,” *Art Journal* (Fall 1991), 56-9  
-- NYT articles on commercialism in museums

**Nov 6: Displaying “the Other” – *REQUIRED*  

* Christa Clarke (b) & Kathleen Berzock, *Representing Africa in American Art Museums* (2010), Intro & Afterward

**Nov 13: Restitution & Repatriation – *REQUIRED*  

* New York Times articles:  
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/13/arts/design/cleveland-museum-buys-antiquities-stirs-ethics-
debates.html?emc=eta1&_r=0
2. The predicament of museums and collectors. Are objects better off in museums?
3. Looted for Love. One woman returns a taken souvenir
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/24/magazine/looted-for-love.html?emc=eta1
4. A dealer in “looted” Indian art. Many US museums have things that came from him

Strongly recommended:
James Cuno, Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage (2010), preface

Further reading on restitution:
Selected articles for and against the repatriation of the Elgin/Parthenon Marbles
Various articles on Nazi/Developing World restitution

Nov 20: Artists in Museums – *REQUIRED*

*B. O’Doherty, Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space, 1976
*Donald Judd, Architektur (1989)

Recommended:

Course requirements

- Reading and class participation (10%)
- Written paragraphs (25%)
- MFA questionnaire (see attached) (25%)
- Final Paper (40%)
Paragraphs

These are intended as response pieces to the readings to help you articulate your thoughts. Hand in your paragraph each week and use them to prepare for class discussion. Keep them on file in your computer; at the end of the term go over them again, make improvements as needed to better express or reflect your views (especially if they have changed!) and then hand them in again as a packet to be graded. The paragraphs should be between a good size paragraph and a page long.

Mid-term MFA Questionnaire (on Trunk)

Visit the MFA and Isabella Stewart Gardner museums (perhaps with someone from class). Take notes in response to the questionnaire and on your computer at home respond to the questions in sequence. Submit your completed response through Trunk before the following class.

Final Paper

Write a final paper 10-15 pages long on a museum-related subject of your choice. You might choose to elaborate on, or build off, one of the paragraph themes or a particular reading. Or you might want to pursue an interest of your own. I am available to discuss any ideas you have. You must get my approval in advance for the topic you choose to write about.